

\$870 Million Revitalization Plan For South Bronx Unveiled by City

By CHARLES KAISER

An \$870 million plan to revitalize the South Bronx, including a new town in the most devastated area, industrial parks, 10,000 new jobs, a greenbelt, gardens and farms, and 22,000 new housing units was unveiled yesterday by Mayor Beame at City Hall.

The five-year plan relies heavily on Federal assistance—from \$658 million to \$738 million between now and 1982—and was drawn up at President Carter's request after his visit last fall to the South Bronx.

A team of city officials flew to Washington last week to brief a White House interagency task force on their proposals. Yesterday, Bruce Kirschenbaum, an associate assistant to the President, called the plan "creative" and a "very good start." The seven Federal departments involved, each represented on the task force by an assistant secretary or a higher official, will give their initial reactions by the middle of next month.

While Mr. Kirschenbaum was cautiously optimistic about the plan, Mayor-elect Edward I. Koch was merely cautious. He said through a spokesman that he would

ask his designee for chairman of the City Planning Commission, Robert F. Wagner Jr., to study the plan. Mr. Koch declined further comment.

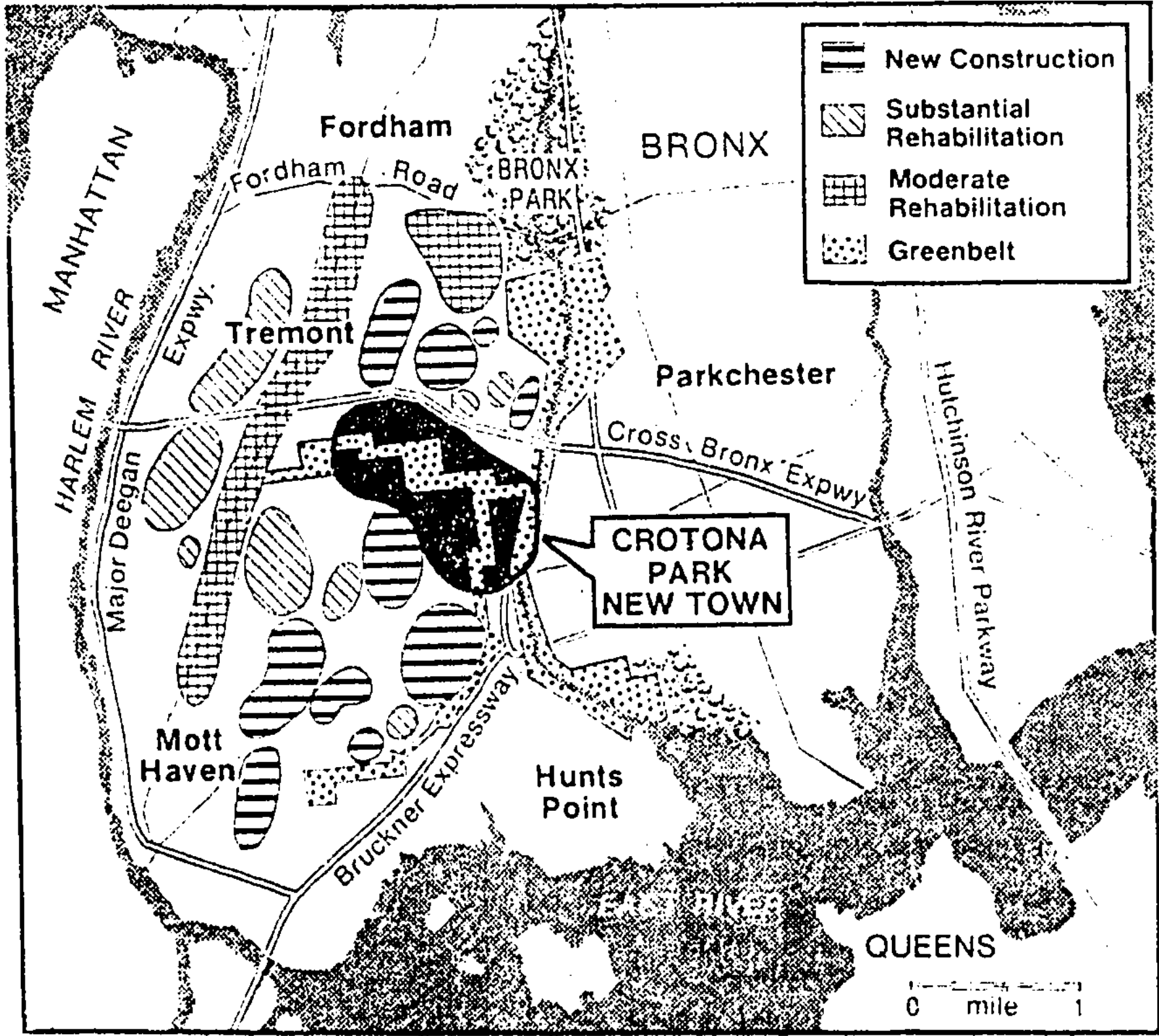
Victor Marrero, the current planning commission chairman who helped draw up the new proposal, said he thought the chances of at least part of it being implemented with Federal help were "very good" because President Carter had committed his prestige to it and "it has a great deal of momentum behind it."

"I don't think the President can visit the area and then do nothing," said Mr. Marrero, who recalled that during his visit, Mr. Carter turned to Patricia Roberts Harris, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and asked her to come up with a plan for the area.

If nothing happens now, Mr. Marrero continued, "people will believe the President didn't mean what he said or he's incapable of producing—and I don't think that is the case."

The major elements of the plan include

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the following:

¶ Development of a 100-acre industrial park at the Harlem River yards, and the upgrading of two other industrial parks.

¶ A new town of low density with 3,000 housing units spread over 250 acres between Claremont and Crotona Parks, currently one of the most devastated areas in the borough.

¶ A Greenbelt with Crotona Park at its heart, extending to urban farms in the southern part of Charlotte Street, and including neighborhood parks in Longwood and Hunts Point that could be connected by bicycle paths.

¶ New federally and privately financed loan programs to assist small businesses and revitalize neighborhood commercial strips, and new construction at the "hub" at Third Avenue and 149th Street and on Fordham Road.

The plan calls for the designation of community sponsors to maintain urban gardens and small farms on city-owned land in the southern portion of the Charlotte Street area. An assistant to the Mayor said this part of the program would be discussed with representatives of the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior.

Plan Called Modest

Robert Abrams, the Bronx Borough President, who was part of the city's delegation to Washington, said yesterday that some of the proposals in the new plan had been under discussion for many years. "I'm convinced we're at a crossroads where great help can come," said Mr. Abrams.

"This is not an overwhelming program," said Mayor Beame. "This is \$180 million a year—it's within reach; it's practical."

Besides the infusion of new Federal funds—which Mr. Marrero and Mr. Kirschenbaum both said could be done with little or no new legislation—the plan calls for \$82.7 million in state funds, \$46.7 million in city funds, and the remainder from other sources, including \$32 million

to \$132 million in loans from commercial banks.

Three themes that run through the city's plan are the importance of economic development, the desirability of low density neighborhoods and the urgent need to preserve, through moderate rehabilitation, the areas that have survived.

Implicit in the city's proposal is the understanding that it will be impossible to rebuild the South Bronx as it once was. The 10,000 jobs it hopes to create equals the number lost in the last four years, while 22,000 housing units represents half the number eliminated through fires and building abandonment from 1970 to 1975.

Only one in four South Bronx residents who start high school graduate from it, and one in three residents are on welfare, but the plan's authors said they could not suggest any new social programs to alleviate these problems.

"Literally billions of dollars have been spent on programs developed by the nation's leading authorities," said the city's report on its proposal, "yet we cannot say with confidence that any practical solutions exist."

The plan's authors said they hoped that by providing jobs and a "decent living environment," the "problems of public dependence will be relieved."